

Academic Freedom and Responsibility

HUMS3001 Lecture 12
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Lecture Overview

- The political spectrum in education
 - ♦ Left vs Right
- Academic Freedom
 - ♦ Definition, UNSW code of conduct
- Cases
 - ♦ Fraser, Mees, Nelson, Burke/Bendle, Young Libs
- Exam Structure

The Political Spectrum

- The Right (conservative)
 - ♦ Sense of crisis
- The Left (reformist)
 - ♦ Sense of stasis, potential
- Where do Australia's two major parties sit?

Donnelly

- Kevin Donnelly's Senate Submission:
"academic freedom in schools and tertiary institutions has been in the past and continues to be compromised by the cultural-left's long march through the institutions. Instead of education being impartial and disinterested, what is taught, how it is assessed and how education is perceived is driven by an ideological, politically correct agenda."

Gelber

- The APSA's submission to the Senate:

“Universities have a special place in the education system of any democratic society. The purpose of a university is [...] ‘to provide a forum for research and discussion where students are encouraged to think for themselves’ (Barendt 2005, 500) [...] Maintaining independence of thought and critical enquiry enables the university to provide value both to the individuals who participate in it, and to wider society which benefits from increased capacities for critical reflection.”

Academic Freedom

- What
 - ♦ “the insulation of professors and their institutions from political interference” (Kennedy 1)
 - ♦ Students?
- Why
 - ♦ “advancing the capacities and potentialities of the next generation [...] is the essence of academic duty” (22)
- Why not
 - ♦ Academics have been known to “favor students [...] or employ institutional resources for personal purposes” (20)

Academic Freedom (UNSW)

- “The University recognises and protects the concept and practice of academic freedom as essential to the proper conduct of teaching, research and scholarship within the University. While academic freedom is a right, it carries with it the duty of academics to use the freedom in a manner consistent with a responsible and honest search for and dissemination of knowledge and truth. Academic freedom is not a defence to poor behaviour or disrespectful treatment of others.”

(“UNSW Code of Conduct” Version 2.0 2009: 2)

Academic Freedom Disputes

- Andrew Fraser (MacU) – Alleged racism
- Brendan Nelson’s vetoes (ARC) – Government interference
- Paul Mees (UMelb) – Government interference
- Anthony Burke (ADFA) v Merv Bendle (JCU) – terrorism/slander
- “Make Education Fair” – Young Libs campaign

Andrew Fraser

- Published a letter in *Parramatta Sun* (6 July 2005)
 - ♦ “an expanding black population is a sure-fire recipe for [...] national suicide”
- Classes cancelled until his retirement mid-2006
- Found guilty of s 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act*

Brendan Nelson

- Australia Research Council (ARC) – major source of government funding for universities
- 2003 – Andrew Bolt criticises ARC as leftists who waste taxpayer money
- 2004–05: Nelson (Education Minister) vetoes at least nine successful grants
- Still no confirmation of which projects or why they were vetoed

Paul Mees

- August 2007: Mees criticises state Government bureaucrat Jim Betts' public transport report
 - ♦ “liars and frauds who should be in jail”
- October 2007: UMelb brings academic misconduct charges against Mees after Betts alleges defamation
- December 2007: Betts joins UMelb for large research grant
- February 2008: Mees found guilty

Burke vs Bendle

- September 2008: Bendle publishes an article, “Hijacking Terrorism Studies” in *Quadrant*
 - ♦ Burke and others have “relentless sympathy for terrorists”, they “defend the Islamist terrorists” and are “pro-terrorist”
- Burke complains to JCU but later withdraws his complaints but asks Bendle for an apology, which is refused

Young Liberals

- Largest youth (16–30) political organisation in Australia
- April 2008– “Make Education Fair Campaign” launched (see “Meet the New Vanguard” in the SMH)
- Academic Blacklist – courses and teachers, posted online
- Led to a Senate inquiry into teaching bias

Senate Inquiry

Established to assess:

1. the level of intellectual diversity and the impact of ideological, political and cultural prejudice in the teaching of senior secondary education and of courses at Australian universities[...]
2. the need for the teaching of senior secondary and university courses to reflect a plurality of views, be accurate, fair, balanced and in context; and
3. ways in which intellectual diversity and contestability of ideas may be promoted and protected, including the concept of a charter of academic freedoms.

Young Liberals Submission

- Submit that:
 1. School curricula be reformed to remove ideological and political prejudice [...] with a focus on traditional disciplines [...]
- Charter of Academic Freedoms
 - ♦ Diverse viewpoints; unbiased, unpoliticised course materials that promote diversity; neutral academics; students should think/speak freely

Senate Outcome

- “the subjectivity of the issues involving academic bias [...] make the terms of reference difficult to address”
- “If there is a Left conspiracy to influence the direction of the nation’s affairs and its social and economic priorities through the process of subverting a generation of undergraduates this is not yet evident.”

Other Examples

- Stem Cell Research Ban (USyd)
- Joe Hockey
- “Laughing at the Disabled” (QUT)
- Rizwaan Sabir and Hicham Yezza (UK)

Proposed Laws

- Opposition education spokesperson:
 - ♦ “Why should academics involved in a public debate be immune from scrutiny above other members of the community?” (Christopher Pyne, qtd in “Law to Back Academic Freedom”, *The Australian* 7 Oct 2009: 21)
- Any legislation must
 - ♦ Allow scrutiny of work
 - ♦ Protect students from bias
 - ♦ Protect teachers from personal attacks
 - ♦ Not contravene human rights

CATEI

- Course and Teaching Evaluation
- Important for students and teachers
- Accessed through MyUNSW – there will be a link to CATEI
- Anonymous
- Results not released until after marks are released

Exam Outline

- Two Parts, equal weight
- Part One – use a case study to answer one of four questions
- Part Two – COMPARE two cases to answer one of four different questions
- One hour per answer

Study sheet

- PT ONE
 - ♦ Case study #1 – two quotes
 - ♦ Theory – two quotes
- PT TWO
 - ♦ Case Study #2 – one quote
 - ♦ Case Study #3 – one quote
 - ♦ Theory – one quote
- Backup Theory – one quote